

FRENCH POET WHO TRANSLATED POE PERVERSE GENIUS

BAUDELAIRE: A STUDY. By Arthur Symonds. E. P. Dutton & Co. Reviewed by STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

THE greatest French poet after Villon, the most disreputable and the most creative poet in French literature, the greatest artist in French verse, and after Verlaine the most passionate, perverse, visionary and intoxicating of modern poets, comes Baudelaire, infinitely more perverse, morbid, exotic than these other poets. In these words Arthur Symonds characterizes the writer who may be termed the "French Poe," and at one stroke indicates the reasons both for the singular fascination of Baudelaire and for what is uncanny and repellent in him.

The wild, turbulent life and the weird, elusive genius of the man are described by Mr. Symonds in flowing,



Portrait of Baudelaire Drawn by Himself.

luxuriant style, rich in thought and illustration; we catch glimpses of a strange, almost unearthly personality, unstable as that of a Goldsmith, incomprehensible as that of a Poe; we see a man in the toils of a great struggle, constantly succumbing, repentant perhaps, yet certain to succumb once more. For the feet of Baudelaire are deeply planted in the mud, though his eyes are on the stars; he beholds great visions, views great spectacles invisible to the common man, yet grovels with the lowest, descends from the angel to the beast, changes from the man of inspiration to the man of animal passions. A Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde sort of being perhaps, yet not absolutely unique as such, but rather a highly accentuated specimen of a type; in him is exemplified the noblest as well as the lowest in human nature; there is something pathetic, almost tragic about the man, aspiring always to the heavens, rooted forever to the earth. And, as Mr. Symonds well brings out, Baudelaire's works abound in evidences of the conflict; the evil and the combat with evil stand out as well as the wonder and the glory of the pure poetic vision. And perhaps therein lies the secret of Baudelaire's greatness; he was a man who experienced and felt, who felt deeply, felt as perhaps few ever do; and therefore he was able to express what others could not.

The life of Baudelaire was one of unfulfilled possibilities as well as of prodigious accomplishments. Dying at the age of 46, his physical energies burned away by years of riotous living, he might yet have had before him a long career of achievement that would have dwarfed even his own past attainments. As it was, he spent his whole life writing one book of verse (out of which all French poetry has come since his time), one book of prose in which prose becomes a fine art, some criticism which is the sanest, subtlest and surest which his generation produced, and a translation which is better than a marvelous original. This translation, it is needless to mention, is that of the tales of Poe, which Baudelaire discovered to be so in accordance with his own way of thinking that he declared that he himself might have written them sentence for sentence and word for word. Incidentally, it will be recalled that Baudelaire was the main factor in

popularizing Poe in France, and in establishing him permanently as an element in French intellectual life. But Baudelaire himself still remains much of an enigma. His character is even now clouded in mystery; his works explain their author but incompletely. "The illustrious poet, the faultless critic, the fearless artist," Swinburne called him, and thousands

Paris recalls Baudelaire and discovers John Keats

By PANAME.

AN Englishman once came to Paris for the express purpose of offering his homage to Chateaubriand and Paul de Kock, whom he considered the two most important living French writers! After calling upon the author of the "Genie du Christianisme" he sought out the gay fabricator of amusing tales, now largely forgotten. When the visitor had explained why he came to France, De Kock asked if he had seen Chateaubriand. Yes, he had.

"Then you have begun your dinner with the roast and ended with cabbage soup!" Such wit and modesty amount almost to genius. And one more story of De Kock. When the Prussians approached Paris in 1870 he tried to enlist.

"Leave them to me," he said. "I'll make them die—laughing!"

It happened that the centenary of Baudelaire's birth fell near the fiftieth anniversary of De Kock's death. That is the only relation possible to discover between them. The French poet is far closer to Keats, to whose centenary the magazines and newspapers have given a good deal of space. Translations of the young English poet's letters have been published in *La Revue Hebdomadaire* and in *Comœdia*. In one of these we read:

"L'imagination est notre possession la plus authentique et la plus précieuse. C'est elle qui nous fait voir la beauté dans la laideur, la vie dans la mort, le divin dans le matériel."

If you will read the quotations from Baudelaire given in this letter you will find that in this conviction at least the two poets were at one.

I will not say much of the ceremonies held at Baudelaire's birthplace, at 15 Rue Hauteville, where the authorities placed a bronze tablet. But it amused me to see M. Paul Guichard, Director of Municipal Police, present to honor the poet. In Baudelaire's lifetime the police manifested a quite different sort of interest in his works!

We may confine ourselves, for the sake of concentration, to Baudelaire as critic of art. Read and reread those masterpieces, "Aesthetic Curiosities" and "Romantic Art." In his ultimate notes, as he jotted down his impressions, he could let himself go with a brusque severity, somewhat cruel at times. But in his revised work we never find a systematic attempt to overthrow a reputation. That is because Baudelaire gave to a work of art, a picture, an undivided love. And if he varied praise with blame there was more of the first than of the second. In any case it was all given without prejudice.

Love of Beauty for her own sake made him put aside mediocre things as unworthy of his attention. He was willing to point them out if he thought them harmful, but it was only of beautiful things that he loved to speak. And of them he wrote with a perfect understanding of the principle involved, warmed by a profound passion. That is what we find in the two books I have named. Note this passage in a chapter on imagination—which he names "The Queen of the Faculties"—written in the course of a study of current exhibitions:

"The whole visible universe is only a collection of images and of symbols to which imagination gives a place and a relative value; it is a kind of rough mass which the imagination ought to assimilate and transform. All the faculties of the human soul should be subordinate to imagination, which brings them all simultaneously into use. Just as a thorough knowledge of the dictionary does not necessarily imply knowledge of the art of composition, and as the art of composition itself does not imply a universal imagination, so a correct painter may not be a great painter, but a great painter is bound to be a correct one because the universal imagination includes knowledge of all the methods and the desire to master them."

Elsewhere he has given another treatment of the same theme: "Imagination is not fancy, neither is it sensibility, although it would be difficult to conceive of an imaginative man who was not sensitive. "Imagination is an almost divine faculty which perceives instantly, without aid from any philosophical methods,

would have echoed that sentiment. Yet Mr. Symonds may well ask, in the concluding paragraph of his monograph, "Had he been thoroughly understood by the age in which he lived?" And perhaps the best answer is that which Mr. Symonds gives, in the words of Blake, "The ages are all equal; but genius is always above the ages."

Those who remember the storms and strife in the book business a few years ago can, with a backward look, measure the great progress the trade has made since the first annual convention was held. Most of the irritating trade evils have been wiped out, largely as the result of cooperative efforts initiated by the booksellers' and the publishers' associations.

No longer are trade evils the chief subject of the association's meetings. To-day the booksellers are mainly interested in means of rendering better service to the American public. They are trying to find new ways to bring books intimately into the lives of the people; to improve their merchandising standards, and make themselves an important and wholesome influence in their communities.

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The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Eugene L. Herr of Lancaster, Pa.; vice-presidents, Louis A. Keating of Syracuse, N. Y., Marion E. Dodd of Northampton, Mass., and Whitney Darrow of New York; treasurer, John G. Kidd of Cincinnati; secretary, Belle M. Walker of New York.

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The play proved to be a knockout. Playwright Anderson had it packed with chuckling wallops at the trade and hits at individual bookmen. The lines were hurled over the footlights in a way that overpowered the beating waves of surf beneath the Steel Pier floor by a cast of "boys in the trade" which included Earl H. Balch, Adam Burger, Melville Minton, James Malloy, Leon Archer, Walter Thwing, Howard C. Lewis, John Winter, Guy Holt and Phillip M. Anderson.

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"You can take pride in the fact that you are among the best retailers in the United States. The bookseller is really rendering a service of advising his customers on the books that will give him pleasure. You booksellers make it your practice to use discernment and discretion in adapting merchandise made in the mass and printed by the ton to the individual service and development of human beings. That is the highest ideal of retailing. "American retailing is so woefully blind and inefficient that you will render immense help in bringing about a better America if you will see to it that the reading function is used to give the public more and more knowledge in the moulding of a saner nation, with less extravagance, less wastefulness and with higher standards of business, finance and economic conditions. "As booksellers you can do even more than the average teacher or professor, because you are graduating students every day, while the instructors keep one group for four years."

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C. T. Brainard, president of Harper

POETS AND THEIR ALLIES

The booksellers' convention

By DUDLEY A. SIDDALL.

THE twenty-fifth annual convention of The American Booksellers' Association, held at the Hotel Traymore, Atlantic City, May 10 to 12, demonstrated that an almost ideal harmony prevails among publishers, wholesalers, authors and retailers.

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Brook, wasn't on the banquet programme, but he obliged the lucky one at his table with mystic marvels of magic. Next thing we know he'll be trying to swipe Houdini away from Dutton's so he can add to his repertoire.

Prohibition hasn't hurt Atlantic City receipts. Ginger ale, with nothing in it but ice, retails at a dollar per glass in the palaces of jazz frequented by us guys with expense accounts and others of the idle rich. Cheaper than the good old bad old days, at that.

David O'Connell went to bed at 5 A. M. Thursday. Nope, we're not talking. We're boosting. It took all night to prepare the seating arrangements for the banquet. And Dave did the work.

Miss Effie Huebely of Loeser's book department, Brooklyn, won C. S. Shoemaker's prize offer of an airplane trip over Atlantic City for her costume of "Hanna Bye" at the Tuesday night ball given by the Woman's National Book Association. Bad weather prevented the trip, but it's possible that for once bad weather looked good to Miss Huebely.

Miss Alice Dempsey of Gimbels was slated to go in the plane along with Miss Huebely. "How come?" we asked of one who ought to know. "Why not?" was the answer. "Ain't Alice an ace?"

President Madge Jenison of the Woman's National Book Association was among them there.

Prizes at the costume ball Tuesday evening were awarded as follows: Ladies' first, Miss Grace Gaige of R. H. Macy & Co.; second, the world famous Grant sisters; men's first, A. L. Burt; men's second, H. S. Hutchinson. Macmillan's mechanical department should have been awarded an extra prize on Miss Gaige's costume, which was made from white satin on which all the cuts in "Wells' Outline of History" had been carefully printed.

"I had a little nap in Philadelphia," said G. M. L. Brown of the Orientalia store, New York, in the course of his speech. "And if it hadn't been for that little soothing sleep in Philly I certainly would never have shown up here."

The estimable James Le Gallie of the Philadelphia North American couldn't get over that harmless little pleasantry. "You New York guys gimme a pain," says Jim in his Yewasqueesque lingo. "You're always ringing in something about Philadelphia being asleep. Well, all I gotta say is heaven help New York if Philadelphia ever wakes up."

Looked like old home week at the Chicago News when Henry Blackman Sell of Harper's Bazar, Johnny Weaver of the Brooklyn Eagle and Harry Hansen, the News's present literary editor, got together.

NEW BOOKS

Fiction.

ALICE ADAMS—By Booth Tarkington. Doubleday-Page. TALES FROM A ROLLTOP DESK—By Christopher Morley. Doubleday-Page. REVOLUTION: A STORY OF THE NEAR FUTURE IN ENGLAND—By J. D. Beresford. Putnam. HUMOROUS GHOST STORIES—By Dorothy Scarborough. Putnam. FAMOUS MODERN GHOST STORIES—By Dorothy Scarborough. Putnam. THE KINGDOM ROUND THE CORNER—By Coningsby Dawson. Comopolitan. UP CEILINGS—By W. Douglas Newton. Appleton.

History and Public Affairs.

"THE NEXT WAR": AN APPEAL TO COMMON SENSE—By Will Irwin. Dutton. A DEFENSE OF LIBERTY—By the Hon. Oliver Brett. Putnam.

Satire.

THE OLD SOAK AND HAIL, AND FAREWELL—By Don Marquis. Doubleday-Page.

Essays.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF RICHARD BARTHOLME—Edited with introduction and notes by Margaret W. Landes. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company.

Science.

EINSTEIN'S THEORIES OF RELATIVITY AND GRAVITATION—A Selection of Material from the Essays Submitted in the Competition for the Eugene Higgins Prize of \$5,000. Compiled and edited by J. Malcolm Bird. Scientific American Publishing Company.

Religion.

THE SHORTER BIBLE: THE OLD TESTAMENT—Translated and arranged by Charles Foster Kent. Scribner.

Miscellaneous.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE FURNITURE—By Wilhelm von Bode. Translated by Mary E. Herrick. New York: William Heinemann.

BALKANIZED EUROPE

By Paul Scott Mowrer

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN says: "It is the best manual of reference for Americans who desire to know why we do not understand Europe and why Europe does not understand us."—N. Y. Times. "A mine of understanding and wisdom... an invaluable volume."—N. Y. Herald. \$5 at any bookstore or from E. P. Dutton & Co., 681 5th Ave., N. Y.

There are tears in it—and smiles



The Kingdom Round the Corner

The Story of a Grown-up Peter Pan

Coningsby Dawson

THE story of Tabs, who said there was a different kingdom for every different person.

Tabs, who awoke one day to find the kingdom of his dreams a heap of ruins.

Tabs, who in his search for his kingdom, helped Terry and Braithwaite and Maisie and Lady Dawn to find their kingdom.

Read The Kingdom Round the Corner. It may help you find your kingdom. It is as many and tender a story as ever was told.

Illustrated by W. D. Stevens

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By BURTON KLINE

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